

Applicants : Steven L. Ringler et al.  
Appln. No. : 10/099,886  
Page : 2

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

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1. (currently amended) A heat-sealing instrument comprising:
- a shroud having,
  - a hair inlet aperture, and,
  - a heating-element cavity;
  - a sheath positioned in said heating-element cavity;
  - a heating element positioned in said heating-element cavity, wherein said heating element is positioned within said sheath and is thermally coupled to said sheath; and,
  - a handle supporting said shroud.
2. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 1 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 400°F to about 1,000°F.
3. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 2 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 600°F to about 1,000°F.
4. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 3 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 800°F to about 1,000° F.

Applicants : Steven L. Ringler et al.  
Appln. No. : 10/099,886  
Page : 3

5. (currently amended) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 1 further comprising a sheath, ~~said sheath heat coupled to said heating element~~ thermally conductive paste positioned between said heating element and said sheath.

6. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 5 wherein said sheath includes a polished surface.

a / 7. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 1 further comprising a vacuum source drawing fumes from the proximity of said heating element.

8. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 7 wherein said vacuum source includes a hose connected to said handle.

9. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 8 wherein said vacuum source draws said fumes through the interior of said handle.

10. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 7 further comprising a filter, said filter filtering said fumes drawn from the proximity of said heating element.

11. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 1 further comprising a temperature control unit in communication with said heating element.

12. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 11 further comprising a temperature sensor in communication with said temperature control unit, said sensor detecting a temperature proximate to said heating element and generating a temperature signal indicative of the temperature of said heating element.

Applicants : Steven L. Ringler et al.  
Appln. No. : 10/099,886  
Page : 4

13. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 12 wherein said temperature sensor is a thermocouple.

14. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 11 further comprising a user interface in communication with said temperature control unit and wherein said control unit is responsive to temperature commands from said user interface.

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15. (original) The heat-sealing instrument according to claim 1 wherein said shroud includes teeth.

16. (currently amended) An apparatus for the treatment of alopecia comprising:

a shroud having a heating-element cavity;

a sheath positioned in said heating-element cavity;

a heating element positioned in said heating-element cavity, wherein said heating element is positioned within said sheath and is thermally coupled to said sheath;

a handle supporting said heating element; and,

a vacuum source drawing in fumes from the proximity of said heating element.

17. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 400°F to about 1,000°F.

18. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 17 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 600°F to about 1,000° F.

19. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 18 wherein said heating element is heated to between about 800°F to about 1,000°F.

Applicants : Steven L. Ringler et al.  
Appln. No. : 10/099,886  
Page : 5

20. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 wherein said vacuum source includes an air hose connected to said handle, whereby said fumes are drawn in by said vacuum source.

21. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 20 wherein said air hose draws said fumes through the interior of said handle.

22. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 further comprising an air filter filtering said fumes drawn in by said vacuum.

23. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 further comprising,

a temperature sensor generating a temperature signal indicative of the temperature of said heating element; and,

a temperature control, in communication with said temperature sensor and controlling the temperature of said heating element as a function of said temperature signal.

24. (original) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 23 further comprising a user interface in communication with said temperature control and wherein said temperature control is responsive to temperature commands from said user interface.

25. (currently amended) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 ~~further comprising a shroud having,~~

~~a heating element cavity, and~~

wherein said shroud includes a hair inlet aperture, and,

~~wherein said heating element is positioned in said heating element cavity.~~

Applicants : Steven L. Ringler et al.  
Appln. No. : 10/099,886  
Page : 6

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26. (currently amended) The apparatus for the treatment of alopecia according to claim 16 further comprising a ~~sheath, said sheath heat coupled to said heating element~~ thermally conductive paste positioned between said heating element and said sheath.

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